

Meeting Date: January 22, 2014

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1450 Halyard Drive, Suite 6  
West Sacramento, CA 95691  
[www.deltaconservancy.ca.gov](http://www.deltaconservancy.ca.gov)

**Request for *approval* to enter into an interagency agreement to receive funds from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board in the amount of \$370,000, and subsequently enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to receive additional funds for up to \$400,000 to support the Mercury Exposure Reduction Program  
January 22, 2014**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the board authorize the Executive Officer to enter into an Interagency Agreement with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) for \$370,000 funded by the State Water Board's Cleanup and Abatement Account (pending final approval by CVRWQCB's Executive Officer) to provide Project Management for the Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program (MERP). The staff also recommends board authorization to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to receive additional funds up to \$400,000 from individual agencies and other entities participating in the program.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal of the Delta MERP is to reduce human exposure to mercury from consumption of contaminated Delta fish. Objectives of the Program are to:

- Collaborate with affected communities, agencies, and others to plan and implement outreach and educational activities to reduce health risks to people who consume contaminated fish
- Identify at-risk populations and ways to reach these populations
- Identify and implement exposure reduction activities
- Evaluate the effectiveness of activities

The Delta Conservancy will provide program management to the Delta MERP with two main functions: (a) oversight of program activities and other actions to ensure that the Delta MERP is fully implemented; and (b) financial administration. It is expected that Conservancy and CVRWQCB staff will work jointly to manage the program under an interagency MOU allowing the Conservancy to receive up to \$400,000 in funds from agencies and organizations that are contributing to the program, provide oversight, and ensure that the Delta MERP is implemented. The initial focus is to hire a limited term health scientist for the first three years and conduct activities consistent with program objectives. These activities will be conducted under an agency agreement with the Conservancy.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Delta has been identified under the Federal Clean Water Act section 303(d) as impaired due to elevated concentrations of methyl mercury in fish, which poses a human health threat. State Water Resources Control Board Resolution 2005-0060 directed the CVRWQCB to “investigate ways, consistent with their regulatory authority, to address public health impacts of mercury in San Francisco Bay/Delta fish.” To comply with Resolution 2005-0060, the Delta Mercury Control Program required the formation of a Delta-specific mercury exposure reduction program addressed at human consumers of contaminated Delta fish. In October 2011, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved the Delta Mercury Control Program, which was developed to address the mercury impairment. In 2012, CVRWQCB staff worked with interested stakeholders to develop a strategy to form and fund a collaborative exposure reduction program. The Delta Mercury Control Program was incorporated in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins (Basin Plan).

The Central Valley Basin Plan requires that implementation of the Delta MERP begin within six months after the CVRWQCB’s Executive Officer approves the overall Delta MERP workplan. Implementation is anticipated to begin no later than July 2014. The schedule and budget are for a six-year period. The program, however, is only fully funded for the first three to four years. The CVRWQCB will continue to pursue additional resources to fully fund the program.

This program is consistent with the Conservancy’s legislative mandates and mission to work collaboratively and in coordination with local communities to lead efforts that protect, enhance, and restore the Delta’s environment, for the benefit of the Delta region, its local communities, and the citizens of California.

## **BUDGET**

The total Program cost is up to \$770,000. The interagency agreement is for \$370,000. The remaining project cost of up to \$400,000 will be provided by multiple agencies and organizations that are participating in the MERP.

### **Contact Staff:**

Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, Assistant Executive Officer  
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy  
Phone: (916) 375-2086